



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/899,731	07/05/2001	Tommy Petrogiannis	9680.175USU1	2931
23552	7590	09/10/2004	EXAMINER	
MERCHANT & GOULD PC P.O. BOX 2903 MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55402-0903			BLACKWELL, JAMES H	
		ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER	
		2176		

DATE MAILED: 09/10/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	09/899,731	PETROGIANNIS, TOMMY
Examiner	Art Unit	
James H Blackwell	2176	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 05 July 2001.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-24 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 1-24 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on 05 July 2001 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) All b) Some * c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 12/24/02.

4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. ____.
5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) Other: ____.

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1, 3-6, 9-13, 17-20, and 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Mori et al. (hereinafter Mori, U.S. Patent No. 5,040,142).

In regard to independent Claim 1 (and similarly independent Claims 10, and 17), Mori teaches a process in which a person (101) who has created or drafted an electronic document (1) circulates the document (1) among two persons (102) and (103) who review and attest the document (1) (Col. 3, lines 53-65). The document creating person (101) sends the document (1), to which the seal image (S1) of his own is affixed, to the first reviewing person (102) (Step 1), and the reviewing person (102) affixes his seal image (S2) to the document (1) to transmit the same to the reviewing person (103) (Step 2) Col. 3, lines 65-67; Col. 4, lines 1-3; compare with Claim 1 (and similarly Claims 10, and 17), “***... a first state indicating that the at least one section of the electronic document is as approved by an approving user***”. Thus (S2) indicates a document is approved by an approving user. Mori also teaches that when the second reviewing person (103) adds an amendment to the contents of the received document (1), the work station operated by the reviewing person (103) refuses any processing other than the addition of seal image data to the received document (1), eliminates the

seal images S1 and S2 from the received document (1), and outputs the resultant copy (1') of the document body to a display screen (Step 3). The reviewing person then amends the contents of the document copy (1') and adds his seal image (S3) thereto (Step 4) (Col. 4, lines 5-15; compare with Claim 1 (and similarly Claims 10, and 17), “... ***a second state indicating that modifications have been made to the at least one section of the electronic document as approved by said approving user***”). Thus, the reviewer (S3) makes modifications to the document previously approved. The reviewer (S3) who made the modifications then puts his own seal of approval on the document (Col. 4, lines 13-14; compare with Claim 1 (and similarly Claims 10, and 17), “... ***a third state indicating that modifications have been made to the at least one section of the electronic document as approved by the approving user, but that a modifying user has taken responsibility for said modifications***”).

In regard to dependent Claim 3 (and similarly dependent Claims 11, and 18), Mori teaches that once the document is modified, it must be re-circulated for re-approval by the creating person (101) and the first reviewing person (102) (Col. 4, lines 15-25; compare with Claim 3 (and similarly Claims 11, and 18), “... ***in said third state of the status identifier, the modifying user is different from the approving user***”).

In regard to dependent Claim 4, Mori teaches that the person who modified the document (103) then also approves of his changes by affixing his seal (S3) image (Col. 4, lines 13-14; compare with Claim 4 (and similarly Claims 12, and 19), “... ***in said third state of the status identifier, the modifying user is the same as the approving user***”).

In regard to dependent Claim 5, Mori teaches seal images, which are used by all reviewers and the creator of the document. The seal is registered in advance and contains a seal representing their document processing terminals, that can be replaced by an image of their signatures (Col. 3, lines 57-65; compare with Claim 5), “*... the third state of the status identifier further indicates an identity of said modifying user*”).

In regard to dependent Claim 6 (and similarly dependent Claims 13, and 20), Mori teaches that the seal image data is added to the electronic document (Col. 3, lines 65-67; compare with Claim 6 (and similarly Claims 13, and 20), “*... said status identifier is integrated to said electronic document*”).

In regard to dependent Claim 9, Mori teaches multiple reviewers (101-103) (Col. 3, lines 57-58; compare with Claim 9, “*... each of said status identifiers being associated with a different approving user*”).

In regard to independent Claim 23, Mori teaches three seal images (S1-S3) with three different people (101-103) creating and/or approving/modifying the document (Col. 3, lines 57-67; Col. 4, lines 1-15; compare with Claim 23, “*... a plurality of status identifiers for identifying an approval status of at least one section of said electronic document by a plurality of identifying users*”). Mori also teaches a process in which a person (101) who has created or drafted an electronic document (1) circulates the document (1) among two persons (102) and (103) who review and attest the document (1) (Col. 3, lines 53-65). The document creating person (101) send the document (1), to which the seal image (S1) of his own is affixed, to the first reviewing

person (102) (Step 1), and the reviewing person (102) affixes his seal image (S2) to the document (1) to transmit the same to the reviewing person (103) (Step 2) Col. 3, lines 65-67; Col. 4, lines 1-3; compare with Claim 23, “*... a first state indicating that the at least one section of the electronic document is as approved by an approving user*”). Thus (S2) indicates a document is approved by an approving user. Mori also teaches that when the second reviewing person (103) adds an amendment to the contents of the received document (1), the work station operated by the reviewing person (103) refuses any processing other than the addition of seal image data to the received document (1), eliminates the seal images S1 and S2 from the received document (1), and outputs the resultant copy (1') of the document body to a display screen (Step 3). The reviewing person then amends the contents of the document copy (1') and adds his seal image (S3) thereto (Step 4) (Col. 4, lines 5-15; compare with Claim 23, “*... a second state indicating that modifications have been made to the at least one section of the electronic document as approved by the approving user*”). Thus, the reviewer (S3) makes modifications to the document previously approved. Mori also teaches that the reviewer (S3) who made the modifications then puts his own seal of approval on the document (Col. 4, lines 13-14; compare with Claim 23, “*... the improvement wherein each of said status identifiers has a third state indicating that modifications have been made to the at least one section of the electronic document as approved by the approving user but that a modifying user has taken responsibility for said modifications*”).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 2, 7-8, 14-15, 21-22, and 24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mori.

In regard to dependent Claim 2 (and similarly dependent Claims 14, and 21), Mori fails to teach *said status identifier has a fourth state indicating that it is unknown if the at least one section of the electronic document is as approved by the approving user.* However, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to assume that the mere lack of an approval seal on the document would have indicated an unknown state, telling one that the document had not yet been reviewed.

In regard to dependent Claim 7 (and similarly dependent Claims 15, and 22), Mori teaches a document created by a document creating person (Col. 3, lines 57-59; compare with Claim 7 (and similarly Claims 15, and 22), “*... said at least one section of the electronic document includes the entire electronic document*”). Mori does not specifically state that the document is an entire document, or part of a larger document. However, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the

time of invention to assume that the term document could have applied to either state described, providing the benefit of using a common language definition to refer to an electronic work of text.

In regard to dependent Claim 8, Mori teaches multiple status identifiers (S1-S3) (see Fig. 1). In addition, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to assume that the document as taught by Mori could be in multiple sections, or one large single document (see arguments for Claims 7, 15, and 22 above; compare with Claim 8, “*... each of said status identifiers being associated with a different section of said electronic document*”).

In regard to independent Claim 24, Mori teaches status identifiers (S1-S3) (Fig. 1; compare with Claim 24, “*... a status identifier for identifying an approval status of at least one section of said electronic document, said status identifier having*”). Mori also teaches a process in which a person (101) who has created or drafted an electronic document (1) circulates the document (1) among two persons (102) and (103) who review and attest the document (1) (Col. 3, lines 53-65). The document creating person (101) sends the document (1), to which the seal image (S1) of his own is affixed, to the first reviewing person (102) (Step 1), and the reviewing person (102) affixes his seal image (S2) to the document (1) to transmit the same to the reviewing person (103) (Step 2) Col. 3, lines 65-67; Col. 4, lines 1-3; compare with Claim 24, “*... a first state indicating that the at least one section of the electronic document is as approved by an approving user*”). Thus (S2) indicates a document is approved by an approving user. Mori also teaches that when the second reviewing person (103) adds an

amendment to the contents of the received document (1), the work station operated by the reviewing person (103) refuses any processing other than the addition of seal image data to the received document (1), eliminates the seal images S1 and S2 from the received document (1), and outputs the resultant copy (1') of the document body to a display screen (Step 3). The reviewing person then amends the contents of the document copy (1') and adds his seal image (S3) thereto (Step 4) (Col. 4, lines 5-15; compare with Claim 24, ***“... a second state indicating that modifications have been made to the at least one section of the electronic document as approved by said approving user”***). Mori fails to teach that *the improvement wherein said status identifier has a third state indicating that it is unknown if the at least one section of the electronic document is as approved by the approving user*. However, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to assume that the mere lack of an approval seal on the document would have indicated an unknown state, telling one that the document had not yet been reviewed.

Claim 16 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mori in view of Kumomura (U.S. Patent No. 5,850,219).

In regard to independent Claim 16, Mori teaches a process in which a person (101) who has created or drafted an electronic document (1) circulates the document (1) among two persons (102) and (103) who review and attest the document (1) (Col. 3, lines 53-65). The document creating person (101) sends the document (1), to which the seal image (S1) of his own is affixed, to the first reviewing person (102) (Step 1), and

the reviewing person (102) affixes his seal image (S2) to the document (1) to transmit the same to the reviewing person (103) (Step 2) Col. 3, lines 65-67; Col. 4, lines 1-3; compare with Claim 16, “*... a first state indicating that the at least one section of the electronic document is as approved by an approving user*”). Thus (S2) indicates a document is approved by an approving user. Mori also teaches that when the second reviewing person (103) adds an amendment to the contents of the received document (1), the work station operated by the reviewing person (103) refuses any processing other than the addition of seal image data to the received document (1), eliminates the seal images S1 and S2 from the received document (1), and outputs the resultant copy (1') of the document body to a display screen (Step 3). The reviewing person then amends the contents of the document copy (1') and adds his seal image (S3) thereto (Step 4) (Col. 4, lines 5-15; compare with Claim 16, “*... a second state indicating that modifications have been made to the at least one section of the electronic document as approved by said approving user*”). Mori fails to teach a *third state indicating that it is unknown if the at least one section of the electronic document is as approved by the approving user*. However, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to assume that a missing approval image would have indicated that approval had not been performed. Also, Mori fails to teach that *said third state of the status identifier being used for storage of the electronic document*. However, Kumomura teaches a step whereby an electronic mail document is approved and registered with an attached approval seal in an approval column (see Fig. 2). It is commonly known that electronic mail clients can save copies

of forwarded email. In this case, once the approval is made and the email is registered, it is either returned to its sender, or forwarded to the next sender. It would have therefore been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to combine the teachings of Mori and Kumomura because both deal with the approval of documents. The benefit of Kumomura would have been to store the current state of a document to enable future comparison with newer versions.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to James H Blackwell whose telephone number is 703-305-0940. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Fri.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Joseph H Feild can be reached on 703-305-9792. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

James H. Blackwell
09/02/04



SANJIV SHAH
PRIMARY EXAMINER